

NEWSLETTER

The International Toy Research Association

Vol. 1 No.2

Fall 1995

ITRA NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Birgitta Almqvist, Ph.D.

Centre for Research on Toys and Educational Media

University of Halmstad

Box 823

301 18 Halmstad

Sweden

NEWSLETTER
The International Toy Research Association
Vol. 1 No. 2 **Fall 1995**

Contents	Page
Editor's prelude	2
ICCP/TASP World Play Conference	3
Informal ITRA Meeting	6
NCFL News	6
New Publications	7
Journal Announcement	13
New ITRA Contacts	13
BRIO Scholarship	15
Forthcoming Conferences	17
OMEP/UNESCO Play Report	17
What ITRA is	21
Editor's postscript	22
FAX numbers/E-mail addresses	23

Editor's prelude

It is with great pleasure that I note the increasing interest in ITRA, not least as indicated by the many E-mail letters to the secretariat from researchers in different parts of the world. The ITRA secretariat is also happy about the growing heap of written material from ITRA members and others who have been writing articles and books.

This ITRA Newsletter announces new articles and books, presents new toy research contacts, a report from the ICCP and TASP World Play Conference 1995, in Salzburg, Austria, June 6-9, and three forthcoming research conferences: one in Tallinn, Estonia, April 1996, one in Ede, The Netherlands, May 1996, and one in Halmstad, Sweden, June 1996. Also included is an account of the OMEP/UNESCO Play Report, compiled by Professor Emeritus Brian Sutton-Smith.

Special attention is given Waltraut Hartmann, Vienna, Austria, who was honored with the 1995 BRIO Scholarship for her research on play and toys in the teaching process in compulsory school. The honor is recognized by reports from the prize ceremony June 28, and Waltraut's stay in Sweden. A brief background of the BRIO scholarship and a record of earlier scholarship holders is also included.

For readers who are not members of, but interested in ITRA, an account is given for when and how the association was formed, and what its aims are. On the last page you will also find Fax numbers and E-mail addresses to members of the ITRA group.

ICCP and TASP

World Play Conference

International Council for Children's Play (ICCP) and The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) arranged a world play conference in Salzburg, Austria, June 6-9. The conference was held in "Bildungshaus St. Virgil", a beautiful house surrounded by a huge garden and hosting a Kindergarten.

Some one hundred people, of whom more than 70 gave sessions came from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, U.S.A.

Papers were presented by the following members of the ITRA work group: Brian Sutton-Smith, USA Cleo Gougoulis, Greece, Gilles Brougere, France, Waltraut Hartmann, Austria, and Birgitta Almqvist, Sweden.

Opening speeches

The World Play Conference was opened by **Prof. Dr. Günther Bauer**, Director of Institut für Spielforschung, and **Professor Andre Michelet**, France, Chairman of ICCP. The keynote speech: *Rhetorics of Play* was given by **Brian Sutton-Smith** with his, as always, remarkable and challenging reasoning that what usually passes as science of play rather is an ideology of play.

Paper presentations

The following exemplify the various research themes presented during the World Play conference in Salzburg.

Literacy in preschool

The issue now seems to be literacy: **James Christie**, USA presented a paper on

Linking Literacy and Play, and a program to help teachers maximize play's impact on literacy learning. Literacy was also the paper theme of **Kathy Roskos** and **Carol Vukelich**. Kathy gave examples of how literacy training could be organized in a preschool setting, and Carol explained *The Coercive Power of Play Contexts on Children's Writings*.

Those interested in this issue can get more information from **James Christie's** article *Literacy Play Interventions: A Review of Empirical Research, Early Education and Day Care*, 1994, vol. 6, pp. 3-24.

Gender differences

A question which, to judge from the literature, has engaged play- and toy researchers over the years, is how children learn and anticipate gender roles, not least by the producers' gender labeling of toys and games. In his session *Girls and Boys at Play: The Development of Gender Roles through Children's Games*, **Peter Freitag** USA presented a series of pictures not only illustrating gender labeling but more so the male dominance in table games past and present, signified by names such as The little Postman, The Delivery Boy, and Super Hero. In the comparably few games obviously meant for girls, the typical challenge has been how to win fame and beauty, which most often means that the winner of the game is the girl who is 'clever' enough to become a sweet princess or a happy bride, both insinuating that girls are single-minded and that female interests are vain and shallow.

Peter Johnson, USA, also focused on gender differences in his paper *Play and the Issues of Gender*, suggesting that experimenters "should rather look for the simplest explanation given the nature of this phenomenon, and the phenomenon in question may require research that emphasizes the joint contribution of many

categories of variables, not just the bifurcation of the sexes".

Socio-cultural group differences

Ana Maria Araujo Pessanha, Portugal, presented her *Comparative Study of the Play Behavior Between two Groups of Children of Different Social and Cultural Background*, embracing 72 six-to-seven-year-old first graders who participated in an experiment in a toy library in Lisboa. Ana found that "just a play stimulation programme is not solution enough for the children's needs and cannot entirely substitute for the familiar and social environment in which the child is raised, but it is good to think that it can be a help".

Ana Maria's conclusion is that future investigation should consider school problems, minority groups, play programmes and their relationship to schooling, and whether "play should be applied in classroom settings, or if it should rather be part of their free time programmes".

Verbal creativity through play in school

Presenting results from her longitudinal study of *The Viennese Play Programme*, **Waltraut Hartmann**, Austria, in a paper entitled *Das Spiel als Katalysator der sprachlichen Kreativitat*, showed how play can be a 'catalyst' for verbal creativity, not in children's leisure time only, but also as a teaching method in school. (See further: BRIO Scholarship)

Play and drama in school

Arne Trageton, Norway, talked about *Role play and Drama of 6-10 year-olds*. Like Sweden, Norway is lowering the age of the school start from 7 to 6 years in 1997. The concern now is how the 6-year olds will experience the school as compared to the preschool in which play

has been the dominant activity. In several documents, the Norwegian Government has stressed that play should be important, not only for the 6-year olds, but for all four years in lower primary school (6-10 years), "both in its own right as stimulating personality development and facilitating socialization, but also as a method in teaching subject matters in school".

Taken together, the papers by Ana Maria Araujo Pessanha, Waltraut Hartmann, and Arne Trageton, indicate that an important future research issue would be to find out how to use play and toys in school in different countries. Arne Trageton is now planning a project to study role play and drama in a Norwegian afternoon centre for 6-year olds and for 7-10-year olds during school lessons. Those interested to know more about the project can contact him on Fax number: (+47) 53 42 04 77.

Acting and symbolic play

Ana Marjanov Shane, USA presented her view on *Play and Acting: Similarities and Differences*, and **Dongju Shin**, Korea, in her paper *Preschool Children's Symbolic Play In-doors and Out-doors*, focused on the loci as a pre-requisite of play, a question of particular significance for teachers who are about to furnish preschool play environments as well as for playground designers.

For further readings about the significance of play environments, see for example **Elisabeth Phyfe-Perkins**, University of Massachusetts (indoor play environment), and **Joe Frost**, University of Texas, (outdoor play environment), both in **Greta Fein & Mary Rivkin** (Eds.) *The young child at play*, NAEYC, 1986.

Child consumerism

Consumerism in children is an issue with increasing importance in our society today, "in the age of marketing", as **Stephen**

Kline calls it in his book *Out of the Garden* (announced in ITRA Newsletter, vol. 1, No.1, Fall 1994). This theme was also the focus of **Cleo Gougouli's**, Greece, paper *Play and the Development of Consumers: The Debate on Television Advertising of Toys in Greece*. The result of the debate was that, from 1987, toy commercials had been abolished from Greek television. By relating some of the "arguments put forward in the controversy", Cleo concentrates on the question of children's consumer socialization.

Toy museums and activity centres

In his book *Toys and Culture*, 1986, **Brian Sutton-Smith** strongly confirmed that toys are cultural artefacts. To take children to a toy museum where they can see the toys that children were playing with hundreds of years ago is to give them an idea of what toy culture means. It might be thrilling enough for children of today to look at the old toys, but to be allowed to handle the replicas of the toys that the 'old-timers' played with must be even more thrilling. This can be a reality if the toy museum offers a toy play activity centre, which was demonstrated by **Jozsef Kriston**, Hungary, who, beside his paper *Die Ersten 15 Jahre des Ungarischen Spielzeug-museums* [The first 15 years of Hungarian toy museums], presented a film showing how a toy activity centre can be arranged within the toy museum.

Adult Play and Education

There are numerous reflections and research on the relationship between education and play in the child, but the same theme should also be studied in adults, claimed **Gilles Brougere**, France, in his paper *Jeu et Education chez L'adulte* [Play and Education in the Adult], Le Departement des Sciences de l'Education a L'Universite Paris-Nord has opened a module for "play in the formation of the

adult", and the students have chosen this the for their thesis. Gilles Brougere concludes: *L'inter et pour nous qui sommes plutot centr0 sur le jeu des enfants est peut-etre de produire un decentrement en pregnant en compte le jeu de formation pour l'adulte*". Yes, perhaps it is time for us who are rather focusing on children's play to bring our interest and knowledge of children's play a bit further and study in what way it may serve as a means in the forming of the adult.

Senior Play

Starting with play and toys for children, the conference concluded by discussing play for seniors, so inspired by **Gunther Bauer**, Austria, who stressed the importance of play activities for elderly people. The ensuing discussion was partly about how to stimulate elderly people to begin playing, and partly about the benefit of play for elderly people. Another question was what kind of play items might be 'appropriate' for elderly people and what to call these items.

ICCP and TASP Meetings

During the world Play Conference, TASP and ICCP gathered their members to discuss present and future activities. Although a member of both TASP and ICCP, I only attended the ICCP meeting, from which I give a brief report. The meeting elected a new board and decided on the time and place for the next ICCP conference. ICCP President **Andre Michelet** asked to resign from his post. In his place, **Rimmert van der Kooij**, earlier Secretary of ICCP, was appointed President, with Ulrich Heimlich, Germany, as new Secretary and Treasurer. Claus Ehnes, Germany, stayed Vice President with Birgitta Almqvist, Sweden, as new Vice President. The meeting decided to hold the next ICCP conference in Lisboa, Portugal, in 1997.

Informal ITRA Meeting

Between sessions at the ICCP and TASP conference in Salzburg, Birgitta Almqvist (Sweden), Gilles Brougere (France), Cleo Gougoulis (Greece), Waltraut Hartmann (Austria), Dongju Shin (Korea), and Jorn Martin Steenhold (Denmark) gathered for an informal ITRA meeting.

After the forming of ITRA in Utrecht in September 1993 when TME and TMA sponsored the meeting, not much seems to have happened to further stimulate the proceedings of ITEA, for example by contacting members of the group for information about ongoing research, initiate studies concerning questions of importance to toy manufacturers, to finance further meetings or sponsoring future research on the role of toys for children. Those present at the informal meeting decided to form an 'inner group' to activate ITRA by spreading information to members, and stimulate collaborative research.

#####

NCFL News

Nordic Toy Research Conference and Child Culture Biennial

A Nordic Toy Research Conference was held at the University of Halmstad in September, 1994, and a Child Culture Biennial was arranged in May 1995.

The Nordic Toy Research Conference gave a picture of the increasing toy interest among practitioners as well as researchers. Among the speakers can be mentioned **Jeffrey Goldstein** who focused on war toys and aggressive behavior in children, **Per Sparre**, Director of The Swedish Toy Retailers National Association, and editor of the Swedish Toy Review, who gave an overview of the toy trade in Sweden.

The *Child Culture Biennial* was attended both by academics and practitioners, who

gave the latest news on projects, development programmes, held workshops, etc. As the Biennial language was Scandinavian, the titles of the lectures mentioned below - except for Jeffrey Goldstein's - are translated from Swedish and Norwegian and presented in the original language as well as in English.

Krister Svensson, Director of NCFL, and member of ITRA, opened the Biennial with a seminar on the theme *Ar le/cen nodvandig?* [Is Play Necessary?] Other ITRA members were **Birgitta Almqvist** who described *Leksakskulturen i svensk barnomsorg* [The Toy Culture in Swedish Child Care], suggesting its possible consequences for pre-schoolers' play, **Jeffrey Goldstein** who gave *Contrasting views on toys and play*, and **Jorn Martin Steenhold**, who talked about *Legetdj, leg og fantasi* [Toy, Play and Fantasy],

Three other Biennial themes to be mentioned are *Lek - kaos eller ordning* [Play - Chaos or Order/, by the brain specialist and creativity researcher, Professor **Matti Bergstrom**, Finland; *Bams lek - ett kroppsligt drama* [Children's Play - A Bodily Drama/, by **Torben Hangaard Rasmussen**, Denmark, play researcher and author of *Legens betydning* [The significance of Play/, and *Orden og Kaos*, published in Sweden under the title *Den vilda leken* [The wild Play]; **Lars-Erik Berg**, Associate Professor and play researcher at the Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and scientific supervisor at NCFL, spoke about *Lekens Essens* [The Essence of Play]. Lars-Erik's latest book, *Den lekande manniskan* [The Playing Human Being], based on the theories of Mead and Piaget.

Ongoing and Forthcoming Projects

The centre has received grants for two projects in the coming 2-3 years; one

concerning the youngest children's play- and toy environment, and one for producing nine videotaped play situations in 'natural' contexts, such as home, playground, preschool and elementary school. Among planned projects is one concerning play and toys in the teaching of different subjects in Swedish compulsory school, one concerning the selection of play materials in family day care, and one embracing six studies of toy connotations in children's play, the toy as a text, and bodily expressions in play.

Toy museum and activity house

Krister Svensson, Director of NCFL, has reached his goal to establish a toy museum in Halmstad. The toy collection, containing some 30,000 items from the 18th century to the middle of the 1960s, is taken over from its creator Peter Pluntky, and was earlier hosted by the Stockholm Toy Museum. Beside being a source for cultural and historical research on toys, the museum will include an activity centre for children.

Cooperation ITRA - NCFL

The placing of the ITRA secretariat at the Centre for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at the University of Halmstad, Sweden, gives a good opportunity for ITRA members to carry out parts of their research in Halmstad. The centre can offer you office space, fax, computer and E-mail facilities, and an extensive data base with literature on toys, universities and researchers. The data base is continually being updated, and as soon as you have published material or other writings that you want included, you are welcome to send it to the ITRA secretariat, NCFL, University of Halmstad, Box 823, 301 18 Halmstad, Sweden.

ITRA Member Goes to LEGO

ITRA member **Jorn Martin Steenhold**, who for one year has been working at NCFL to build up a Nordic research network, left the University of Halmstad, May 1, 1995, and is now at Lego A/S, International Marketing Research, in Billund, Denmark.

#####

New Publications

Books

Anthony Pellegrini (Ed.) The Future of Play Theory. i4 Multidisciplinary Inquiry into the Contribution of Brian Sutton-Smith. (306 pp.) A volume in the Suny series, Children's Play in Society. The State University of New York Press. Paperback (\$24.95) ISBN 0-7914-2642-4; Hardcover (\$74.50) ISBN 0-7914-2641-6

Contents and authors:

Introduction - *Anthony Pellegrini*

Part I: Play as Progress

1. Play, Ethology, and Education – *Peter K. Smith*

2. Animal Play, Games of Angels, Biology, and Brian - *Robert Fagen*

3. Children's Play and Adult Leisure – *Gary Chick and Lynn A. Barnett*

Part II: Play As Power

4. Competitive Play on the Plains: An Analysis of Games and Warfare Among Native American Warriors Society, 1800-1850 - *John W. Loy and Graham L. Hesketh.*

5. Boys' Rough-and-Tumble Play and Social Competence: Contemporaneous and Longitudinal Relations - *Anthony Pellegrini*

6. Aggressive Toy Play - *Jeffrey Goldstein*

Part III: Play as Fantasy

7. Toys and Stories - *Greta G. Fein*

8. The Promotion and Marketing of Toys: Time to Rethink the Paradox? – *Stephen Kline*

9. Imaginative Play in Childhood: Precursor of Subjunctive Thoughts, Daydreaming, and Adult Pretending Games – *Jerome L. Singer*

10. Social Pretend Play with Mother and Sibling: Individual Differences - *Lisa M. Youngblade and Jucfy Dunn*

Part IV: Play as Self

11. Representing Children's Play: Anthropologists at Work - *Helen B. Schwartzman*

12. Past Play: Relics, Memory, and History - *Bernard Mergen*

Conclusion: The Persuasive Rhetorics of Play - *Brian Sutton-Smith*

Appendix: A List of Brian Sutton-Smith's Play-Related Publications - *F.F. McMahon*

Brian Sutton-Smith, not one to rest on his laurels, recently came out with a new book, this time as editor with **Jay Mechling, Thomas W. Johnson, & Felicia R. McMahon**. *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., March 1995. (600 pp, ISBN 08240-5418-0).

Publisher's note: "A groundbreaking collection of essays on a hitherto underexplored subject that challenges the existing stereotypical views of the trivial and innocent nature of children's culture, this work reveals for the first time the artistic and complex interactions among children.

Based on research of scholars from such diverse fields as American studies, anthropology, education, folklore psychology, and sociology, this volume represents a radical new attempt to redefine and reinterpret the expressive behaviours of children.

The book is divided into four major sections: history, methodology, genres, and setting, with a concluding chapter on theory. Each section is introduced by an overview by Brian Sutton-Smith. The accompanying bibliography lists historical references through the present, representing works by scholars for over 100 years."

Contents and authors:

* Who Are the Folklorist of Childhood? - *Sylvia Ann Grider*

* The Complexity of Children's Folklore - *Rosemary Levy Zumweit*

* The Transmission of Children's Folklore - *John McDowell*

* Double Dutch and Double Cameras - *Ann Richman Beresin*

* Girls' Gaming - *Linda A. Hughes*

* Methodological Problems in Collecting Folklore from Children - *Gary Alan Fine*

* Songs, Poems, and Rhymes - *C.W. Sullivan III*

* Riddles - *Danielle M. Roemer*

* Tales and Legends - *Elisabeth Tucker*

* Teases and Pranks - *Marilyn Jorgensen*

* Children's Lore in School and Playground- *Bernard Mergen*

* Material Folklore of Children - *Simon J. Bronner*

* The Folklore and Adolescents in Total Institutions - *Jay Mechling*

* The Past in the Present: Theoretical Directions for Children's Folklore – *Felicia McMahon and Brian Sutton-Smith*

* Glossary of Key Terms

* Bibliography - *Thomas W. Johnson (and Felicia McMahon)*

Gilles Brougere, Jeu et Education. (284 pp.) Paris: L*Harmattan. ISBN 2-7384-3383-9. Contents:

1 Le mot et la chose

2 A la recherche de configurations perdues

3 La rupture romantique

4 La psychologie, science du jeu de l'enfant

5 L'invention du jeu educatif

6 Le jeu marginalise

7 Le jeu a l'ecole materielle: situation actuelle

8 L'education prescolaire pris au jeu.

Gilles Brougere, Brinquedo e Cultura. Translated from French to Portuguese by Gisela Wajskop. Sao Paulo: Cortez Editora. The book (109 pp.) contains a

collection of papers and articles earlier presented by Gilles Brougere.

Peter Smith and Sonia Sharp (Eds.) both at the University of Sheffield, UK, *School Bullying. Insights and Perspectives*. Routledge, September 1994. (272 pp.) ISBN Hb: 0-415-10372-X - Pb: 0415-10373-8.

Publisher's note: "*School Bullying, Insights and Perspectives, gives a succinct and authoritative account of research into the nature and extent of bullying at schools. Here, for the first time in the UK, is an evaluation of the success of different approaches, including strategies such as:*

- * *developing a whole-school policy*
- * *use of classroom and curriculum materials*
- * *training lunchtime supervisors*
- * *improving the playground environment, and*
- * *working directly with pupils involved in bullying situations.*"

Also edited by Sonia Sharp and Peter K. Smith is *Tackling Bullying in Your School. A Practical Handbook for Teachers*, Routledge, September, 1984 (208 pp.) Pb: 0-415-10374-6.

Publisher's note: "*This comprehensive collection of essays provides a series of highly practical guidelines which schools can implement themselves. Step-by-step advice is given on developing a whole-school policy which is generally seen as the essential nucleus of effective action. The book also suggests methods for tackling bullying through classroom and curriculum activities, including video, drama, and the use of quality circles and of working with pupils involved in bullying situations. Emphasis is placed on assertiveness training for pupils who may be bullied, and non-punitive work with pupils who bully others. As the majority of bullying takes place in playgrounds, the book includes innovative sections on training lunchtime supervisors, enhancing playground activities, and improving the playground environment.*"

Gisela Wegener-Spohring, *Aggressivität im kindlichen Spiel. Grundlegung in den Theorien des Spiels und Erforschung ihrer Erscheinungsformen*. Weinheim, 1995: Deutscher Studien Verlag. (ca 320 pp.) 21 Contents:

1. Einleitung

2. Begriffsklarung von Spiel: Struktur- und Verhaltensmerkmale und "Flow"
3. Zur Begriffsklarung von Aggressivität. Die "Sunde" mangelnder Unterscheidung zwischen Spiel und Realität.
4. Die Behandlung von Aggressivität in den vorliegenden Theorien des Spiels.
5. Spiel: Freiheit, die in der Erinnerung wach bleibt.
6. Manifestationen aggressiver Spiele.
7. Die gesellschaftliche Produktion von gespielter Aggressivität.
8. Rezeption vorliegender empirischer Untersuchungen.
9. Zwei qualitative Spielstudien: In die Welt des Spiels "eintauchen" und Erzählungen "hervorlocken".
10. Zum Umgang mit Aggressivität im kindlichen Spiel: Pädagogische Folgerungen.

James Christie, Arizona State University, USA, *Book of Readings*, that goes with the videotape *Linking Literacy and Play*, intended for preschool and kindergarten teachers. (40 pp.) International Reading Association, 1995.

Content and authors:

1. The Importance of Play - *James F. Christie*
2. Creating Places for Play with Print - *Kathleen A. Roskos*
3. Adult Roles in Supporting Children's Literacy Knowledge - *Billie J. Enz*
4. Watch Me! Watch Me! Understanding children's Literacy Knowledge - *Carol Vukelich*
5. Linking Home and School - *Susan B. Neuman*

About the video: "*Linking Literacy and Play*" provides early childhood teachers and parents with ideas how to use play to foster reading and writing development. It consists of a video-tape, manual, and book of readings. The video is available in US and PAL formats. For information, contact: International Reading Association, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA.."

Joop Hellendoora, Rimmert van der Kooij, & Brian Sutton-Smith (Eds.), *Play and Intervention*. State University of New York Press, 1994. ISBN: 0-7914-1933-9 - ISBN: 0-7914-1934-7. Contains main presentations from the Second Amsterdam Play Symposium, 1991.

Contents and authors:

General Introduction

Paradigms of Intervention - *Brian Sutton-Smith*

PART 1: PLAY THERAPY

1 The Scientific Foundations of Play Therapy - *Jerome L. Singer*

2 Therapeutic play: From Interpretation to Intervention - *Bertha Mook*

3 Stimulating and Guiding Children's Spontaneous Learning in Play Therapy - *Stefen Schmidtchen*

4 Processes in Person-Centered Play Therapy - *Herbert Goetze*

5 Games of Complexity: Reflections on Play Structure and Play Intervention - *Gerde E. Schafer*

6 Imagery Techniques in Play Therapy with Children - *Dorothy G. Singer*

7 Indications and Goals in Imagery Interaction Play Therapy - *Berendien L. van Zanten*

Part 2: PLAY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

8 Imaginative Play Training for Severely Retarded Children - *Joop Hellendoorn*

9 Families at Play: Interventions for Children with Developmental Handicaps - *Roy McConkey*

10 Play Within an Intervention for Multiply Handicapped Children - *Han Nakken, Car la Vlaskamp, & Ruud van Wijck*

11 Effectiveness of Play Training with Handicapped Toddlers - *Jan M. H. de Moor, Betty T. M. van Waesberghe, & Han H.L. Oud*

12 Play Assessment for Play-Based Intervention: A First Step with Young

Children with Communication Difficulties - *Kay P. Mogford-Bevan*

13 Play Training for Autistic Children - *Ina A. van Berckelaer-Onnes*

PART 3: THEORY AND RESEARCH ON SCHOOL PLAY INTERVENTION

14 Play Training. An Overview - *Peter K. Smith*

15 Play: Positive Intervention in the Elementary School Curriculum - *Waltraut Hartmann & Brigitte Rollett*

16 Academic Play - *James F. Christie* Epilogue - *Joop Hellendoorn, Rimmert van der Kooij & Brian Sutton-Smith*

Forthcoming Book Publication

Gary Cross, Pennsylvania State University, *Toys in Making the American Childhood*, Harvard University Press (in press). (See also: New ITRA contacts)

Chapter outline:

1. Their Toys and Ours: Thinking about Childhood, Present and Past.

2. A New Childhood and the Coming of the Toy Box.

3. Training for the future: Boy's machines and Girl's dolls.

4. Fantasy Toys: A Child's World of Imagination and Change.

5. "Improving" Play Through the Educational Toy.

6. The First Generation of TV Kids and Their Toys.

7. Playthings and Children in an Age of Constant Change.

8. The Toy Culture Wars: Parents, Toymakers, and the Future of American Childhood.

9. The Only Difference Between Men and Boys...

Articles

Greta Fein and **Mary G. Fryer**, University of Maryland, College of Education, July 1994: *Maternal Contributions to Toddlers' Symbolic Play Competence*. Available at the ITRA secretariat.

Abstract: *"In this review we examine the research literature that assesses maternal contributions to children's pretence play, especially during the ages between 12 and 36 months. Maternal play behaviour changes as children become more competent players, but the magnitude of the mothers' concurrent or contemporary contribution depends on the age of her child."*

Although these data lack important procedural controls, maternal participation enhances the quantity of children's pretense. Whether mothers enhance the developmental sophistication of children's play is less certain. The hypothesis that mothers contribute to children's subsequent play sophistication receives no support from research. These findings are discussed in terms of alternative models of parental, familial, and cultural influences on the quantity and quality of children's pretense."

Peter K. Smith, *Play Fighting and Serious Fighting: Perspectives on their Relationship*. University of Sheffield, Department of Psychology, (15pp). Available at the ITRA secretariat.

The article highlights the following issues:

- (1) Playful and serious fighting can appear similar, and are sometimes confused.
- (2) Experienced researchers and children can usually distinguish playful and serious fighting,
- (3) The distinction is not an absolute one.
- (4) What about interviewing the participants?
- (5) Summary: the unique role of participants?

In the introduction, Peter states that, although play fighting and chasing, or roughand tumble play, takes up some 10% of children's free playground time, and despite the fact that it was also recognized

by Groos already in 1901, it wasn't much studied until the renewed interest in ethological approaches to children's behavior in the 1970s. Reviews by Anthony Pellegrini (1987) and Peter Smith (1989) show that, today it is well established that "play fighting, while superficially similar to serious fighting, can normally be distinguished in a number of ways".

However, as Peter says: *"We are only beginning to understand how children themselves make this distinction. It is important to know more about this, in the light of evidence that some children may misinterpret cues of hostile or friendly intent (particularly sociometrically rejected children who are aggressive)", and that some rejected children, according to Pellegrini (1988), "engage in play fighting of a less cooperative nature"*.

In a cooperative study, Peter Smith, Tony Pellegrini, Rebecka Smees and Ersilla Menesini found that participants and nonparticipants apprehend play episodes differently; out of 42 video-taped episodes of which the researchers classified 27 bouts as play-fighting, 8 as real fighting, and 7 as having mixed or ambiguous motivation, the participants named 20 as play-fighting, 14 as real fighting, but disagreed about 8 episodes. Moreover, "non-participant children's ratings differed significantly from those of participants, but not significantly from those of the adult researchers".

Peter Smith concludes: *"The results from this study suggest that participants may have unique insights into the nature and motivation of playfighting (and serious fighting) bouts. This insight is best tapped shortly after the incident (we filmed in the morning, interviewed in the afternoon), but is still available to a considerable extent after a one week period Non-participants*

fall back on less useful cues for their judgments.

Adult researchers can of course, by repeatedly replaying and comparing videotaped episodes, get more insight into the issue than most outsiders, and their judgment is probably more useful than that of teachers, who often spend little time in the playground, and who have a different set of concerns about play fighting."

Gilles Brougere, *Images of Play. Representations and Material Supports in the Play's Building - An Example, Barbie.* Universite Paris-Nord, Paris, France.

A few quotations may give a picture of the article, but if you are interested in the topic and want to read the article in full, you are welcome to contact the ITRA secretariat.

"One of the characteristics of play is the manipulation of images, particularly images of the future. Amongst children's play themes one finds constant representations of adult situations: parental role, projections into heroic universes, simulation of professional activities, imitation of these adults who surround the children".

"It is this image of a current desire to be adult that we would like to analyse through a controversial example which is expressed by children and interpreted by adults."

About adult attitudes towards Barbie...

"Barbie rarely provokes indifference and for adults it is as if she was something other than a doll. A number of their reactions seem directed over and above the doll to a character, around whose imaginary existence discussion develops. It becomes a question no longer of the doll but of the character that she may represent. This requires judgements of

Barbie to be formed independently of their relation with the child.

When added to this the current assumption that the child sees the same thing in a doll as the adult, it follows that this same thing be a real and integral part of the object, that it may impose itself on each user, condition him, and hence model his future. It is the relationship with this image, largely built by adults, which the child perceives when he comes into contact with the doll."

... and towards children's play with Barbie and other controversial toys

"An abundance of examples could be found and children could be traced to show how they are not directly faithful to their play themes in the future life. This is the case with many controversial objects such as Barbie, or in the case of boys, war toys. Those who have manipulated war toys do not necessarily become soldiers and those who do must have reinforced their play with other experiences."

"Play must be interpreted as an expression as rich in meaning as it is in frivolity and without consequence, in other words detached from acts that have immediate effects in the present and sometimes directly on the future such as scholastic activities. That certain images are more seducing than others is in the order of things, but play moderates their influence by the plurality of its inspiration sources."

Book chapter

Hein Retter, *Bilderbuch und Medienwelt - und heute.* In: 150 Jahre Pestalozzi Verlag. Erlangen: Pestalozzi-Verlag. ISBN: 3-614-42801-X. Hein Retter takes up the following issues:

1. "Kindheit" zwischen Befurchtungs- und Bewunderungs-Padagogik.
2. Spielzeug und Bilderbuch - kein Thema mehr für Kindheitsexperten?

3. Von der Vernetzung – zur Verdrängungsthese.
4. Trends und ihre Bewertung.
5. Bilderbücher - ihre Stärke.

Let me serve our German-speaking members by quoting from Section 2, Spielzeug und Bilderbuch - Kein Thema mehr für Kindheits-experten?

"Spielmaterialien und Bilderbücher hielten im 19. Jahrhundert ihren Einzug in die Häuser des Bürgertums; "Puppe, Fibel, Schiessgewehr" war es in der deutschen Kaiserzeit die Bildungs- bzw. Spielmittel, mit denen die junge Generation ausgestattet wurde. Heute, in einer Zeit, in der eine reichhaltige Spielzeug- und Bilderbuchwelt zum Ausstattungsrepertoire von Kinderzimmern breiter Bevölkerungsschichten zählt (zumindest in den westlichen Industrieländern), liess sich, so gesehen, statt von 'Medienkindheit' mit gleichem Recht von 'Spielzeug- und Bilderbuch-kindheit' sprechen - aber jedem ist deutlich, dass dies keine ernsthafte Erwägung sein kann. ...Es scheint so, dass kaum neue Erkenntnisse mehr hinzukommen können – abgesehen von innerhalb der Mediendiskussion Bilderbuch und Spielzeug als kaum mehr wahrgenommenes Element der 'multimedialen Vernetzung' der Alltagswelt von Kindern eher randständige Positionen zugewiesen erhalten habe."

For the complete chapter, please contact the ITRA secretariat.

#####

Journal Announcement

Recently, *Play action*, 1995 #1, Number 20, reached the ITRA secretariat. "Play Action is the journal of the **Fair Play for Children Association** and the **Fair Play for Children Charitable Trust Limited**, which exist to promote the Child's Right to

Play as proclaimed in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child* and as agreed in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Fair Play seeks to secure appropriate and equal opportunities for all children to participate fully in society's cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure resources."

For more information, please contact Fab-Play for Children, 5 York Rd., Bognor Regis PO21 1LW, U.K. Fax: 01243-869022.

#####

New ITRA Contacts

One ambition of the ITRA secretariat is to build up and maintain a network of researchers in different countries and cultures. Sometimes, new contacts are forwarded by ITRA members, sometimes 'old-friends' in the field make direct contact with the secretariat, and sometimes contacts come through rather unexpected channels. To show how the network is continually built up, and to inspire others to forward contacts to the secretariat, I will briefly relate the story behind some of the new ITRA contacts.

Member forwarded contacts

Thanks to **Stephen Kline**, the ITRA secretariat now has both regular and stimulating correspondence with **Wendy Varney**, whom Steve met at a conference in Sydney, Australia. Wendy is a postgraduate student in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her research is focusing on the shaping of children's manufactured toys. Among her publications are: *Children's make-up: Masking the contradictions*, Journal of Australian Political Economy, No. 33, 1994, and *Toys R Big Business*, published in Current Affairs Bulletin, vol. 70, No. 2, pp. 11-15.

Her paper, *The playful marketing through toys*, presented at a national conference held in July 1994 by Young Media Australia and the New College Institute for Values Research, was published in Stephen Frith & **Barbara Biggins** (Eds), *Children and advertising: A fair game?* New College Institute for Values Research, New College, and The University of New South Wales.

Another new contact forwarded by **Stephen Kline** is **Gary Cross**, Professor of History at the Department of History, College of the Liberal Arts, Pennsylvania State University. Gary is about to finish his book *Toys in making of American Childhood*, to be published by Harvard University Press, June 1996. He used a grant last summer to work in the collection of Strong Museum, Rochester, a centre for American material culture with - as he writes, "an exceptional collection of toys and catalogs from about 1870 to 1940". Gary was invited by the University of California, Santa Cruz to give an address of those findings. During a January to September leave this year, Gary Cross has been completing research at the Library of Congress, the *Please Touch Museum* in Philadelphia, USA.

Conference contact

Vickii Jenvey from Australia participated in the TASP/ICCP conference in Salzburg in June, and since then has regular contact with the ITRA secretariat via E-mail. Vickii is Lecturer in Psychology at Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia, and her PhD thesis was about play and toys. One of her reports is entitled *What do we know really about toys?*

Other contact sources

Sometimes a new contact comes through a chain of persons. **David Hawtin**, Director General of British Toy and Hobby Association in London, received a message from **Dolores Just**, Barcelona, saying that

Imma Marin Santiago, Barcelona, "*could make a good contribution to the work of the International Toy Research Association*", David forwarded the message to Jeffrey Goldstein, who forwarded it to the ITRA secretariat. The foreign language preferred by Imma Marin Santiago's is French. Following the aims of the ITRA 'inner group', formed in Salzburg, her address and phone number have been forwarded to Gilles Brougere, Universite Paris-Nord, France.

Imma Marin Santiago is Diplome de Professeur d'Education Generale Basique (Primaire), and Specialite en Sciences Humaines par l'Universite Autonome de Barcelone. Some of her publications are:

Joies Populaires. I tit, a que jugues? Col. leccio Temes d'Infancia, No. 23. Ed. A.M. Rosa Sensat.

El joc col. lectiu traditional, 2a Edicio, 1990. Livre qui recueille une serie de jeux populaires **Catalans** pour les garcons et filles de l'Ecole Maternelle. Publie par la Mairie de l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. *Draguijoc, fitxes didactiques*. Edicions Junior S.A., 1991.

Publication d'articles en rapport avec le jeu, le jouet et l'education dans le temps libre, publie dans des revues specialisees: *Perspectiva Escolar, Infancia, Estris, Juguetes y Juegos de Espaha*.

After having watched a TV program in which I answered some question about my study *Age and Gender Differences in Children's Christmas requests*, Dr. Anna Olofsson, marketing researcher at the University of Umea, Sweden, contacted me and told me that Greta Pennell, a doctoral student at the Department of Marketing, School of Business, New Brunswick, USA is doing research on children's Christmas requests. Greta is about to finish her doctoral thesis, which includes a number of interesting perspectives on children's toy requests to Santa.

Beside 600 letters to Santa, her data encompass the interactions of about 1,600 individuals with Santas at four different shopping malls in New Brunswick. One focus of her work is to find out what kind of things Santa suggests to children, and "*treating those suggestions and Santa himself, as socializing agents*".

The method Greta used in collecting data about children's interaction with Santa was to sit near Santa in the mall and, dressed in an 'elf costume, take notes "under the auspices of Santa's chief elf who helps Santa keep track of all the requests he gets during this busy holiday season". Greta is also examining children's requests to see whether girls and boys differ in the extent to which they make requests for others when 'talking' with Santa.

At the 1993 Annual Conference of the Association for consumer Research, Nashville, TN, Greta presented a paper entitled *Babes in Toyland: Learning an Ideology of Gender*.

This is the abstract:

"This paper examines the subtle, yet powerful ways children are taught a traditional ideology of gender through toy advertising. By integrating hermeneutical and semiotic methods, this research decodes the symbolic language of gender encoded in the toys themselves and their presentation in print advertisements and catalog listings. The themes of females as 'babes', living in a fantasy world, that are inferior to males emerged from the analysis. This research demonstrates cultural values and preserve traditional relations between the sexes."

#####

BRIO SCHOLARSHIP

The BRIO Scholarship was founded in 1991 to honor Lennart Ivarsson, the former Managing Director at BRIO and now chairman of the board at BRIO. BRIO is short for the Brothers Ivarsson – the internationally well known Swedish toy company in Osby in the south of Sweden, particularly famous for its wooden toys. The scholarship nomination is made by a jury elected by the BRIO Veteran Board, and the prize is handed over by Lennart Ivarsson at a ceremony in Osby. The qualification to be nominated for this cultural scholarship is to have done research or other important developmental work for the benefit of children.

Earlier holders of the scholarship

The first scholarship was dispensed in 1992 when it was given to **Birgitta Almqvist**, University of Uppsala, Sweden, for her work to make the issue of children and toys a research field in Sweden, where such research up till then was non-existent.

In 1993, **Brian Sutton-Smith**, University of Philadelphia, USA received the BRIO scholarship for his brilliant contributions to the knowledge and understanding of children's play and toys, his generous support of young researchers who wish to enter the toy research area and contribute to the understanding of the role of toys for children, and his strong emphasis on the cultural aspects of toys.

The 1994 BRIO scholarship was given the **Swedish Montessori Association** for its ambition to spread Maria Montessori's pedagogy and, in doing so, demonstrating the view that good toys are vehicles for children's learning, an important aspect of child development.

The 1995 BRIO scholarship

This year the prize was given to **Waltraut Hartmann**, University of Vienna, Austria, for her remarkable pioneer work to make the Vienna Grundschule open its doors for free choice of play and toys in the school. Arriving from Vienna June 27, the day before the prize ceremony, Waltraut was taken on a seven-hour (!) trip by car to three famous Swedish glassworks, and the same evening she participated in an informal dinner party was given in her honor in the BRIO toy museum, known by tourists as 'Lekoseum' (lek=play).

The prize ceremony day started with a guided tour through the BRIO wooden-toy factory, followed by a formal lunch with some 30 specially invited guests, and after that, Waltraut gave her lecture (related above), and received the prize – symbolized by a 100 x 70 cm large cardboard check - from Lennart Ivarsson, the former director of BRIO. In the afternoon the same day, Waltraut left Osby for Halmstad to visit the Nordic Centre for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at the University of Halmstad. After a seminar with the NCFL staff, she paid a visit to a countryside school where preschool classes are combined with elementary school classes integrating grade one and two. The formal program of Waltraut's stay in Sweden ended late that afternoon with a meeting with NCFL leader Krister Svensson to discuss future research collaboration.

The following is a summary of the lecture Waltraut gave on receiving the 1995 BRIO prize from Lennart Ivarsson:

"In 1983, I initiated a play research programme at the Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology at the Institute of Psychology ... Twelve Viennese elementary school classes were provided with a rich assortment of play materials sponsored by

the Association of Austrian toy industry and toy retailers. In each classroom four specific play areas were defined and the teachers were instructed in the pedagogy of play. Play sessions were scheduled in the morning before classes began, at recess, during lessons when children were requesting a play session ad hoc, or when they became restless, exhausted, or tired.

The results of the study showed that freechoice play as a part of the elementary school curriculum promotes contentment with school, a cooperative attitude towards the teacher, and creativity ... no differences were found regarding scholastic achievement although the pupils in the play-enriched classes had spent many hours playing ... As a direct result of this research, the concept of Learning Through Play was placed at the top of the list of recommended learning styles by the Austrian Ministry of Education in 1987.

School authorities now appreciate the value of play in elementary school now. A follow-up study was carried through in the 1991/92 school year to determine whether the play-programme had any effect on the later development of the pupils ... the experimental group still showed a higher verbal intelligence than the controls. The greatest change was in the teachers' style of instruction and in the way they see their own role now: Frontal teaching was abandoned, teachers became more flexible and tolerant and they learned to observe their pupils instead of interfering immediately."

Waltraut Hartmann and Liane Hanifl recently completed their work, *Some Aspects of Gender Differences in Socialization at School*, a comprehensive empirical study for the Austrian Ministry of Education and the Arts. The report comprises the results of the Viennese Play Project.

"The goal of this long-term study was the analysis of gender differences and the influence of play in Elementary School on the cognitive, emotional and social development of girls and boys. School-career, play and other leisure-time activities of the teenagers (9th grade) are included."

#####

Forthcoming Conferences

Tallinn, Estonia, April 1996

The Preschool Education Department of Tallinn Pedagogical University will hold a conference on Play, Development and Educational Environment, April 15-19, 1996, in Tallinn, Estonia. "All researchers, educators and practical specialists in the field of education of small children are welcome. Registration fee will be \$100 which includes accommodation, breakfast and lunch." The address of the organizing committee is: Dr. Aino Saar, 25 Narva Road, EE0100 Estonia. Fax: (+ 372) 2-425-339.

Ede, The Netherlands, May 1996

An International Play Therapy Conference will be arranged by P AOS in Ede, The Netherlands, May 23-25, 1996. Interested parties can contact PAO, P.O. Box 325, 2300 AH Leiden, The Netherlands. Phone (+31) (0)71-143143, or fax (+31) (0)71-140145.

Halmstad, Sweden, Summer 1996

International Toy Conference, in honor of Brian Sutton-Smith, arranged by The Centre for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL), at the University of Halmstad, Sweden, June 17-21, 1996. June 17-21 is a pre-conference meeting with various lectures. The main conference starts Wednesday, June 19, and terminates Friday June 21 with a genuine

Swedish Midsummer feast. A more detailed program will be sent out together with the invitations. If you wish to participate in the International Toy Conference, send your name, address and particular focus of research or other toy related activities to Krister Svensson, NCFL, University of Halmstad, Box 823, 30118 Halmstad, Sweden, by December 15, 1995.

ITRA meeting, 1996

An ITRA meeting is planned to take place during the NCFL World Toy Conference at the University of Halmstad, Friday June 21, 1996. For more information, please contact the ITRA secretariat.

#####

Omep/Unesco Play Report

Brian Sutton-Smith the results of the OMEP-UNESCO Play Report. If you want to read the whole report, please contact the ITRA secretariat. Brian's letter:

I'm enclosing the names of the 75 English speaking persons who were so good as to contribute to the report. I thought you might be pleased to know the names of the other conscientious professionals who, like yourself, have made a contribution to my part of this project. In addition, I have included a quite preliminary and rough summary of your responses, which I have made for other members of our editorial group. The French speaking group had their own group of respondents. We are working on the final document this year. If you have other comments you wish to send me after reading this summary, please let me know. What we most need is the ability to turn some of this opinionating into useful recommendations. Seeing there is so much that is controversial, making useful recommendations is not easy to do.

*Yours sincerely
Brian Sutton-Smith*

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded by 75 persons from 21 countries: 32 from USA, 10 from Greece, 4 each from Canada, England, and Russia, 2 each from Germany, Belgium, Japan, and Bulgaria, and one each from Holland, Austria, Australia, Iceland, Turkey, Ireland, India, Denmark, Poland, Nigeria, New Zealand, and Norway.

Here are the 12 questions and some selected responses:

#1 Do you think that play contributes to the child's development (cognitive, affective, social)?

60 respondents, of which the majority accepted the view that play contributes to child development. One exception was **David Myers**, Lloyola University, who said: "Play cannot be discussed separately from cognition, nor can it be said to be a 'contributor' to cognitive development. Play **is** cognitive development"

Theodore D. Wachs, Purdue University, said: "In many countries the dualism between play and work is not as clear as in our own. We separate our children's play from their work and then raise the issue of what the work of play is. Whereas the real issue may rather be about the conditions that have a common effect both on play and on the cognitive, social and emotional processes in development, for example risk, stress, nutrition etc., all of which presumably inhibit both play and non play processes."

#2. What do you think is the effect of the modern world on a child's imagination (pretence, representation, fantasy, symbolic activity)?

18 respondents of which the majority said that they found the modern world

"complex, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, depending on such circumstances as the family socio-economic level, the influence of parents, teachers, peers, the toys and the technology in the home.."

It was also argued that "small boys today are possessed by violent super hero television images. They are victims of prepackaged play". Others explained their view that all pretense is not imaginative because "imagination also has its abuses as above".

#3. Interaction: Do you think play reflects or models gender, society, economics, race, culture, leadership and other factors of social interaction?

22 replies of which the majority answered YES, but several of them also raised the question whether children's play copies or transforms the input from the larger culture. **Bernard Mergen**, George Washington University says that: "Play's reflection is distorted, fun house image and its modelling is a box of Tinker Toys without an instructional manual". **Hein Retter**, Germany, explains that "empirical research could show that there are many connections between children's play and the cultural context".

#4. Are you in favor of play in the family?

17 responses of which one claimed that play in the family "is like talk, something just to be taken for granted", but others commented that "this is not the case on a world wide basis", e.g. **Valentina Ivanova** who quoted a Russian study showing that no more than 11% of the parents acknowledged such activity.

Steve Kline, Canada, said: "Play in the family may save the family - but first people have to turn off their TV's (i.e. the

displacement of family play by entertainment is serious) and then parents have to remember the games and playful activities from their own childhood - I think a lot of parents are motivated to play but don't know how to set up play situations."

#5. Peers: Are you in favor of autonomous, interactive peer play (boys and girls, friends, children of different ages)?

17 responses, all of them in favor of free self chosen playmate play by children. Gisela **Wegner Spohring**, Germany, explained that: "The contents of play are located in the let's pretend world, not in the reality ... children learn real social behaviors in play ... they learn empathy by putting themselves in the playmates position ... to leave aggression and conflicts at the let's pretend level ... to maintain a sensible dramaturgy of play." **Jean-Pierre Rossie**, Belgium, pointed out that the benefits of mixed gender groups are rare throughout the world after the preschool years, and **Tatiana Antonova**, Russia, mentioned a Russian study indicating that more than 30% of the playtime is spent in solitariness. **Tony Pellegrini**, USA, claimed that adult or teacher child play, particularly in the preschool years, has beneficial educational advantage: "Children perhaps learn more about fantasy from each other, but they learn about school competences more readily from adults".

#6. Organized play: Are you in favor of play organized by adults (in teaching, education and recreation)? 22 responses, of which several opposed to the adult organization of children's play, and almost all of the respondents were suspicious of adult intervention. A few respondents pointed to "the absolute necessity for

therapeutic as well as educational or recreative reasons for such intervention", meaning that there are children who are "unsocialized into play and are neglected or rejected by their school mates".

#7. Toys: What impact do you think the presence or absence of toys has on children's play? 18 respondents. This question parted the respondents in two groups; one which was very suspicious of toys, "if by toys we mean the commercialized toys of the industrial twentieth century", while the other half were in favor of accepting toys as a part of modern society or at least of arriving at some compromise with their existence. The 'anti-toy' respondents meant that "children need to be encouraged to play word games, dramatic play and nature play to offset the world wide hegemony of commercial toys and the attempts of toy makers to define play in terms of play with their toys ... because modern toys dampen creative play ... such toys are not necessary for play; children have always played without them." The 'pro-toy' respondents, on the other hand, suggested that modern toys are "currently more safe, more often developmentally designed and more available for coping with stress (e.g. medical toys, play therapy toys, etc.)" They also pointed out that "the variety of such toys can enrich and provide for possibilities otherwise often not envisaged by either parents of children ... toys deal with the fundamental child ambivalence between cultural reality and child fantasy."

#8. What impact do you think technological products have on children's play (toys, MTV, video games, computers, virtual reality)?

14 respondents of which seven were overwhelmingly negative, four were

divided and three were positive. The negative said: "children's symbolic processes are effected and controlled by media with stereotypical images which take away from the child's ability to be freely creative in play ... media inhibit and constrict play through advertising of toys, related TV programs and video games ... the solitude of play is increased by machines ... group play decreases ... play can become addictive."

The few positive replies were that there is no research evidence for any of these contentions, and that media increases the variety of play and shifts the balance from the older times when there were many fewer alternatives. David Myers, USA, declared: "I do not believe, however, that technology has any significant impact whatsoever on children's play, which is fortunately so deeply embedded in human neurophysiology that it lies far beyond the reach of the sensory impressions (or deprivation thereof) of a single lifetime."

Other positive respondents suggested that children make their own uses of whatever is available and the opportunities are multiplied by the stimulation of the media.

#9. Traditional games: Do you think traditional games are important for modern childhood?

Of the 17 responses, 11 were positive and six were negative. Supporters felt that traditional games could bring an older and broader set of values that was not often obtained in modern play opportunities. The negative respondents meant that "traditional games" usually implies a rather static view of what tradition really means, and that they may reflect adult nostalgia rather than child value. The most important to children is to generate their own play "traditions".

#10. Places and times: Do you think there should be special places, schedules, and structures for children's play (playtimes, toy libraries, play museums, theme parks)?

Almost everyone of the 14 respondents was positive, but one said NO, it was time to "step back from all of this pressure on children ... all this organisation of their time." One spoke of "training parents to realize the need for play places at home as well as on playgrounds, and one said that the need for such provision was greater for older than for younger children. The important thing was not the places but the educational provision they would provide.

#11. Acceleration: Do you think that an accelerated program has any consequences for play?

12 respondents of which seven answered that educational acceleration has negative effects on children's play ... on their creativity, spontaneity, on the whole child, on losing the basic 'meaning' of the very materials being studied, decreasing opportunities for the child to use play as a free expression of inner motivation, on professionals deciding the goals of play but not the children.

Others said there was little relationship between what happened in school and what happened in play, and that the idea of playing was purely Western, because "in some parts of the world (Asia) high academic standards were managed with little play provision at all.

#12. Difficulties: How do children play in situations of extreme difficulty (physical or mental handicaps, personal problems, discrimination, war, catastrophes, family stress, neglect)?

17 respondents, of which can be mentioned **Ludmila Obuchova**, Russia who gave examples of blind-deaf children who cannot play, **Hein Retter**, Germany, who gave examples of children who, caught up in severe struggle for existence, were unable to play, and that most therapists can cite severely emotionally disturbed children who first arrive without being able to help themselves through play.

On the other hand, most children seem to use play as the major way to cope with conflicts, either by the help of therapists or "as time passes". Children have been seen playing in war zones, concentration camps, in Cambodian and Sarajevo refugee camps, after Pearl Harbor, and after the LA riots.

George Eisen, California, author of *Children at play in the Holocaust*, asks why our classical theories of play are so inadequate to explain these high stress phenomena. He suggests that "play alone provides the human organism with a holistic response to atrocity and trauma".

#####

What ITRA is

The following is mainly an account of the press release written by Jeffrey Goldstein, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, September 10, 1993, researchers from around the world met at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, where they formed ITRA - the International Toy Research Association. Grants from the Toy Manufacturers of America (TMA), New York, and Toy Manufacturers of Europe (TME), Brussels, enabled 16 researchers from 12 countries to meet in Utrecht.

Participating in the meeting were:

- Kathleen Alfano, Fisher Price, U. S. A.,
- Birgitta Almqvist, Sweden,
- Gilles Brougere, France,
- Greta Fein, U.S.A,
- Jeffrey Goldstein, The Netherlands,
- Joop Hellendoorn, The Netherlands,
- Waltraut Hartman, Austria,
- Rachel Karniol, Israel,
- Stephen Kline, Canada,
- Anthony Pellegrini, U. S. A.,
- Hein Retter, Germany,
- Jean-Pierre Rossie, Belgium,
- Peter K. Smith, U.K..
- Gisela Wegener-Spohring, Germany,
- Jorn Martin Steenhold, Denmark,
- Brian Sutton-Smith, U. S. A.

Also invited though unable to attend the meeting in Utrecht were Jaqueline Jukes, U.K., and Cleo Gougolis, Greece.

The organization will enable scholars to: 1) exchange the latest research, 2) collaborate on multi-cultural studies of toys, 3) be a source of expert opinion about toys for the media, consumers, and the toy industry, and 4) contribute to public understanding of the importance of toy play.

The purpose of ITRA

The fundamental reason for the forming of an association exclusively for toy research is that, while play research has a long tradition and is well established, research on the role of toys in children's play and development is still limited. The purpose of ITRA is to make toy research progressive all over the world in order to broaden and spread knowledge about toys and promote the development of good toys for children.

#####

Editor's Postscript

The ITRA secretariat is always grateful to receive news and to be able to exchange news and ideas with the members. One ambition when we formed ITRA in Salzburg 1993, was to build an E-mail network. Unfortunately, not all ITRA members are yet connected to Internet, Compuserve or other E-mail systems, or can be reached by Fax. On the last page of this newsletter, however, you will find E-mail addresses and/or Fax numbers to some 20 members. If you are on Fax or if you have an E-mail address unknown to the secretariat, please let the secretariat know as soon as possible.

As earlier mentioned in this Newsletter, the Nordic Centre for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at the University of Halmstad, Sweden, has built up a database which is continually being updated. Send in published material or other writings to the ITRA secretariat so that it can be included in the NCFL database. You are also welcome to make requests for titles on literature, or names and addresses to Universities and departments.

If you are on sabbatical or has a Fulbright or other fund, it may be possible for you to come to the University of Halmstad to work with your research and/or hold seminars and give lectures. If you are interested, contact Krister Svensson, NCFL, University of Halmstad, Box 823, 301 18, Halmstad, Sweden. For Fax and E-mail (see last page of this newsletter).

Let the secretariat know about your ongoing or planned research project. If you are interested in cross-national research projects - it might mean financial support from more than one country, and make comparative studies possible to carry out - let us know.

If you know of a forthcoming research conference, or a research journal that might be of interest in the line of toy research, please let the secretariat know.

The next ITRA Newsletter is planned for Spring 1996. If you have material that you want included, the secretariat would appreciate it before March 15, 1996.

ITRA Newsletter Editor

FAX NUMBERS AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

Birgitta Almqvist	Sweden	(+46) 601577 15 77 20	100103.2166@compuserve.com
Gilles Brougere	France	(+ 33) 40 40 91 03	brougere@d.univ-paris 13.fr
James Christie	USA	(+1) 602 965 0223	atjfc@asuvn.inre.asu.edu
Gary Cross	USA	(+1) (814) 863 7840	GSC2@psuvm.psu.edu
Greta Fein	USA		GF2@umd.edu
Jeffrey H. Goldstein	NL	Fax/Phone (+31) 302333892	goldstei@fsw.ruu.nl
Cleo Gougoulis	Greece	(+ 30) 1 883 4020	
Waltraut Hartmann	Austria	Fax/Phone (+ 43) 1 46 02 06	
Joop Hellendoorn	NL	(+31)71 27 31 19	
Vivkii Jenvey	Australia		v.jenvey@sci.monash.edu.au
Jacqueline Jukes	UK	Tel: (+44)273 321 473	
Stephen Kline	Canada		kline@sfii.ca
Anthony Pellegrini	USA	(+1) 604 291 4024	tonypell@uga.cc.uga.edu
Greta Pennell	USA	(+1) 706 542 4277	pennell@tai.rutgers.edu
Hein Retter	Germany	(+49) (0531)391 4577	
Peter Smith	UK	dept fax (+44) (0)1719197873	pss01pks@gold.ac.uk
Jorn Martin Steenhold	Denmark	(+45) 75 332145	
Brian Sutton-Smith	USA	Fax/Phone (+1) 813 927 3907	
Krister Svensson	Sweden	(+46) (0) 35 15 73 87	Krister.Svensson@isb.hh.se
Wendy Varney	Australia		Wendy_Varney@uow.edu.au
Gisela Wegener-Spohring	Germany	(+49) (0)551 399 324	